

Square Is In!

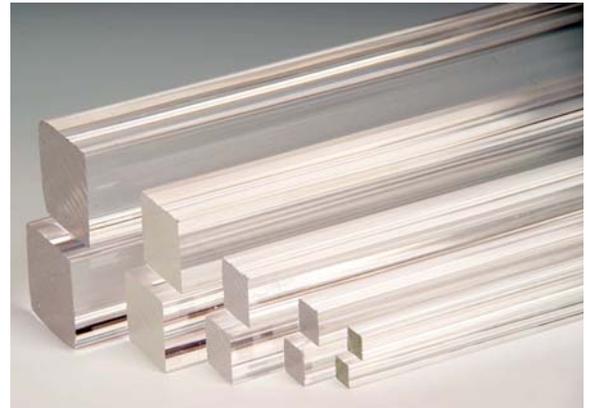
By Jennifer Patterson

Reducing polymer clay canes with acrylic rods in 5 easy steps!

Square acrylic rods are used most often to reduce square canes. By using rods to support the cane during reduction, the design inside the cane remains crisp, no matter how small the cane gets.

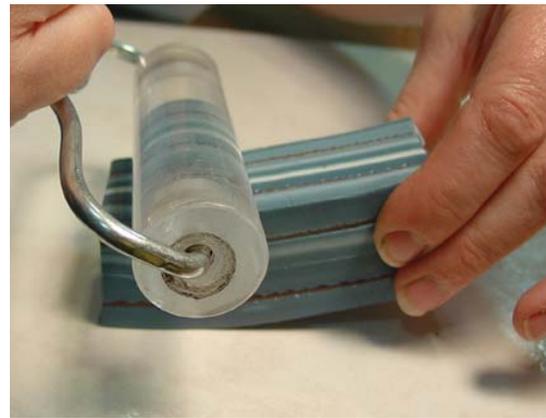
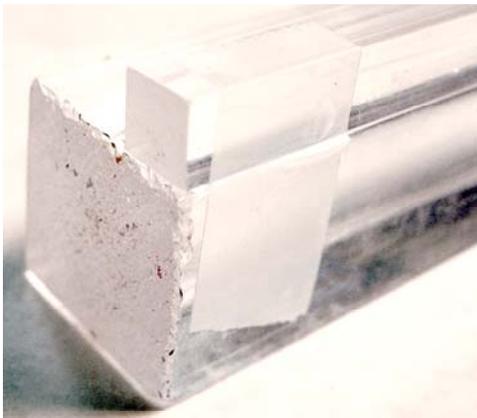
Acrylic is best for the reducing rods because it is easy to clean and the clay does not build up on the surface.

You will find that incorporating acrylic rods into the caning process is easy. When your cane has been assembled into a square, you are ready to reduce.



If your cane is smaller than your largest acrylic rod, you are ready to go. If your cane is larger than your largest acrylic rod, you can tape two rods stacked together to make a taller reducing guide.

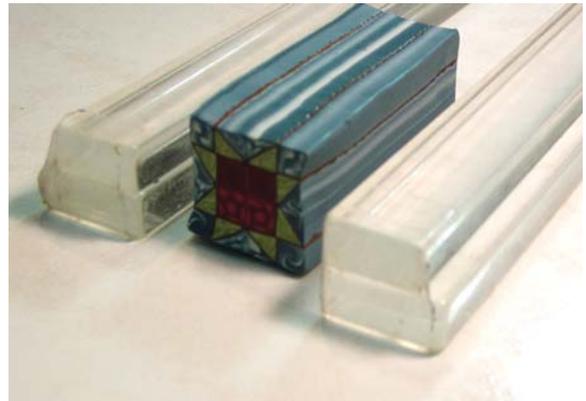
Alternatively, you could reduce the cane to approximately 1/4-inch taller than your largest acrylic rod by stretching it and rolling your brayer over it.



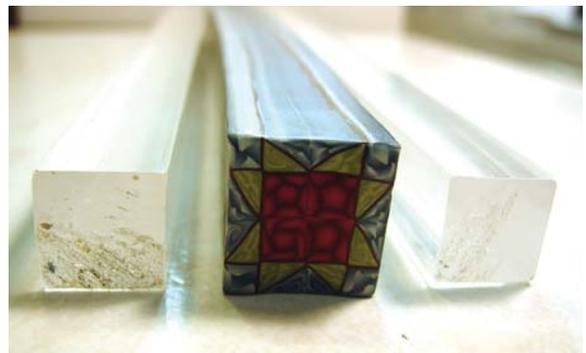
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1. Place the acrylic rods on either side of the cane, but without touching the clay. Grasp one end of the cane securely but not too tightly. Lift the end of the cane up off the work surface slightly and gently pull, while at the same time rolling your brayer. Roll the brayer along the top of the cane from the ends toward the center. Rotate the cane 90 degrees so another one of the cane's sides is now facing up. Repeat the lifting, pulling, and running the brayer along the length of the cane on all 4 sides.

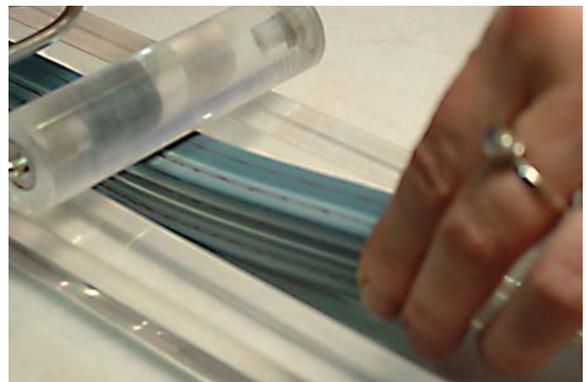


2. Flip the cane end-to-end, and repeat the process. In this way, you will reduce all sides equally. Reduce slowly! If you work too quickly the outside of the cane will move faster than the center, and the cane will not reduce evenly. While this is normal to some extent, if you work slowly, you will lessen the amount of distortion.



Note: This is where I feel Fimo Classic and Kato Clay do their best work! The ends you are holding will usually be distorted, this is normal. However, with these firmer clays, once the cane starts moving you can hold the ends and nearly pull the cane smaller, and decrease the amount of distortion.

3. Try to reduce the cane evenly, but if you find there are areas of the cane that are smaller than the rest of the cane, then reduce only on the areas to either side of the smaller area until the height of the cane is even all along the length. Be careful not to crush the corners while you do this.
4. Continue to rotate and roll the brayer until the cane is flush with the height of the acrylic rods.



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5. After you are certain that your cane is square and even on all sides, it is time to change to the next smaller rod size - 1/4" smaller than the first set.

Repeat the same techniques, and continue until all sides are the desired finished size, always squaring it up as you go.

You can also lengthen the cane by holding it up vertically with one hand, then stroking and tugging gently downwards with your other hand, and lengthening it as you go.

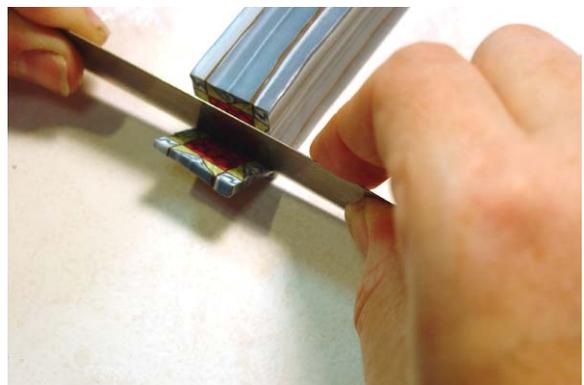
Again, flip the cane and do the same from the opposite end. Your cane is going to get long! If it becomes too much to handle, simply cut it in half and reduce each one separately.



Once all your canes are made and reduced, you are ready to start slicing. Enjoy!

Since acrylic rods come in a variety of sizes, if you want specific cane sizes, they serve as great guides.

For further details on the caning process and artists' tools, visit our **Artist Tools** section at <http://www.QuiltedInClay.com>



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